1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

643 almost complete autonomy in the management of their
101 local affairs. In the remainder, called the Jaintia Hills, which became British in 1835, it has been the wise policy of the Government to maintain the indigenous system of administration through officers named *dolois*, who preside over large areas of country with very little interference. All the British portion of the hills is what is called a "Scheduled District" under Acts XIV and XV of 1874, and legislation which may be inappropriate to the conditions of the people can be, and is, excluded from operation within it. In these circumstances the administration is carried on in a manner well calculated to win the confidence and attachment of the people, who have to bear few of the burdens which press upon the population elsewhere, and, with the peace and protection guaranteed by British rule, are able to develop their institutions upon indigenous lines. It is now more than forty years since any military operations have been necessary within the hills, and the advance of the district in prosperity and civilization during the last half-century has been very striking.

177 The first contact between the British and the
648 inhabitants of the Khasi Hills followed upon the
● 175 acquisition by the East India Company, in consequence of the grant of the *Dīwānī* of Bengal in 1765, of the district of Sylhet. The Khasis were our neighbours on the north of that district, and to the north-east was the State of Jaintia,* ruled over by a chief of Khasi lineage, whose capital, Jaintiapur, was situated in the plain between the Surma river and the hills. Along this frontier the Khasis, though not averse from trade, and in possession of the quarries which furnished the chief

113 * The previous history of the Khasi State of Jaintia, so far as it can be traced, will be found related in Mr. E. A. Gait's *History of Assam* (1906), pp. 253-262.

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

supply of lime to deltaic Bengal, were also known as troublesome marauders, whose raids were a terror to the inhabitants of the plains. Captain R. B. Pemberton, in his Report on the Eastern Frontier (1835), mentions* an attack on Jaintia by a force under Major Henniker in 1774, supposed to have been made in retaliation for aggression by the Raja in Sylhet; and Robert Lindsay, who was Resident and Collector of Sylhet about 1778, has an interesting account of the hil tribes and the Raja of Jaintia in the lively narrative embodied in the "Lives of the Lindsays." † Lindsay, who made a large fortune by working the lime quarries and thus converting into cash the millions of cowries in which the land-revenue of Sylhet was paid, appears to have imagined that the Khasis, whom he calls "a tribe of independent Tartars," were in direct relations with China, and imported thence the silk cloths ‡ which they brought down for sale in the Sylhet markets. A line of forts was established along the foot of the hills to hold the mountaineers in check, and a Regulation, No. 1 of 1799, was passed declaring freedom of trade between them and Sylhet, but prohibiting the supply to them of arms and ammunition, and forbidding any one to pass the Company's frontier towards the hills with arms in his hands.

The outbreak of the first Burma War, in 1824, brought us into closer relations with the Raja of Jaintia, and in April of that year Mr. David Scott, the Governor-General's Agent on the frontier, marched through his territory from Sylhet to Assam, emerging at Raha on the Kalang river, in what is now the Nowgong district. This was the first occasion on which

* P. 211. † Vol. iii., p. 163, 177, &c.

‡ These cloths, which Lindsay calls "*moongadutties*," were really the produce of Assam, and were *dhutis* or waist-cloths of *muga* silk.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

177 Europeans had entered the hill territory of the Khasi
648 tribes, and the account of the march, quoted in
175 Pemberton's Report,* is the earliest authentic information which we possess of the institutions of the Khasi race. Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton, who spent several years at the beginning of the 19th Century in collecting information regarding the people of Eastern India, during which he lived for some time at Goalpara in the Brahmaputra Valley, confused the Khasis with the
[101] Garos, and his descriptions apply only to the latter people. The name Garo, however, is still used by the inhabitants of Kamrup in speaking of their Khasi neighbours to the South, and Hamilton only followed the local usage. In 1826 Mr. David Scott, after the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam and the occupation of that province by the Company, entered the Khasi Hills in order to negotiate for the construction of a road through the territory of the Khasi *Siem* or Chief of Nongkhlāw, which should unite Sylhet with Gauhati. A treaty was concluded with the chief, and the construction of the road began. At Cherrapunji Mr. Scott built for himself a house on the plateau which, two years later, was acquired from the Siem by exchange for land in the plains, as the site of a sanitarium.† Everything seemed to promise well, when the peace was suddenly broken by an attack made, in April 1829, by the people of Nongkhlāw on the survey party engaged in laying out the road, resulting in the massacre of two British officers and between fifty and sixty natives. This led to a general confederacy of

* Pp. 218-220. It appears from p. 219 that Mr. Scott's report is responsible for the erroneous statement (often repeated) that the mountaineers "called by us Cossyahs, denominate themselves Khyee." This second name is in fact the pronunciation current in Sylhet of the word *Khāsi*, *h* being substituted for *s*, and should be written *Khāhi*.

† In Mr. Scott's time it was usual to speak of such a place as a "Sanatary."

most of the neighbouring chiefs to resist the British, and a long and harassing war, which was not brought to a close till 1833. Cherrapunji then became the head-quarters of the Sylhet Light Infantry, whose commandant was placed in political charge of the district, including the former dominions in the hills of the Raja of Jaintia, which he voluntarily relinquished in 1835 on the confiscation of his territory in the plains.

Cherrapunji, celebrated as the place which has the greatest measured rainfall on the globe, became a popular station, and the discovery of coal there, and at several other places in the hills, attracted to it many visitors, some of whom published accounts of the country and people. The first detailed description was apparently that of the Rev. W. Lish, a Baptist missionary, which appeared in a missionary journal in 1838. In 1840 Capt. Fisher, an officer of the Survey Department, published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal * an account which showed that the leading characteristics of the Khasi race had already been apprehended; he mentions the prevalence of matriarchy or mother-kinship, notes the absence of polyandry, except in so far as its place was taken by facile divorce, describes the religion as a worship of gods of valleys and hills, draws attention to the system of augury used to ascertain the will of the gods, and gives an account of the remarkable megalithic monuments which everywhere stud the higher plateaus. He also recognizes the fact that the Khasis as a race are totally distinct from the neighbouring hill tribes. In 1841 Mr. W. Robinson, Inspector of Schools in Assam, included an account of the Khasis in a volume on that province which was printed at Calcutta. In 1844 Lieut.

* Vol. ix., pp. 833 sqq.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

114 Yule (afterwards Sir Henry Yule) published in the Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society * a much more detailed description of the hills and their inhabitants than had been given by Fisher. This formed the basis of many subsequent descriptions, the best known of which is the attractive account contained in the second volume of Sir Joseph Hooker's *Himalayan Journals* † published in London in 1854. Sir Joseph visited Cherrapunji in June 1850, and stayed in the hills until the middle of the following November.

797 177 175 Meanwhile the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, originally located at Sylhet, had extended their operations to Cherrapunji, and in 1842 established a branch there. They applied themselves to the study of the Khasi language, for which, after a trial of the Bengali, they resolved to adopt the Roman character. Their system of expressing the sounds of Khasi has since that time continued in use, and after sixty years' prescription it would be difficult to make a change. Their Welsh nationality led them to use the vowel *y* for the obscure sound represented elsewhere in India by a short *a* (the *u* in the English *but*), and for the consonantal *y* to substitute the vowel *i*: *w* is also used as a vowel, but only in diphthongs (*ăw*, *ew*, *iw*, *ow*); in other respects the system agrees fairly well with 114 the standard adopted elsewhere. Primers for the study of the language were printed at Calcutta in 1846 and 1852, and in 1855 appeared the excellent "Introduction to the Khasia language, comprising a grammar, selections for reading, and a Khasi-English vocabulary," of the Rev. W. Pryse. There now exists a somewhat extensive literature in Khasi, both religious and secular. An exhaustive grammar, by the Rev. H. Roberts, was

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

4. The Bhoi — occupy the northern slopes of the Khasi Hills, covered with thick semi-tropical forests; they practise jhum cultivation. 619

5. The Lynngam — inhabit the western border of the Khasi Hills, near the Garo Hills. They are said to be half-Khasi and half-Garo. Their economy is similar to that of the Bhoi.

These ecological and geographical differences correspond also to politico-historical differences. From the 16th century to 1835, eve of the annexation of the Jaintia Hills to the Khasi Hills under the British administration, the people of the Jaintia Hills formed part of the Hindu Jaintia kingdom, whose capital was Jaintiapur, on the border of the present East Pakistan and of the Jaintia Hills. The capital, at one time, was moved to Nartiang near Jowai in the heart of the Jaintia Hills. The Jaintia Hills were administrated by twelve governors. Such a highly developed economic system as based on wet rice cultivation, must have helped a great deal in forming a kingdom adjoining the plain. Through the common economy and political organization with the Hindus of the plain, the Hindu civilization of the Bengal plain penetrated deeply among the Jaintias, who are matrilineal hill dwellers. 175 648

On the other hand, the Khasi Hills have remained outside the histories of either Assam or Bengal. They were governed by a number of petty native chiefs: there were twenty-five chiefs ruling the Khasi Hills when the British colonial administration was established there. Most of these chiefs belonged to the Siem clan. The history of the Khasi Hills had been shrouded in darkness till the beginning of the 19th century, except for fragmentary stories such as Khasi raids on the Sylhet people.

The development of the upland Khasi Hills started with the establishment of its headquarters at Shillong in 1874. Since then the features of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills have changed a great deal. What was once a small Khasi hamlet, untouched by the light of history, has become nowadays a busy modern town where many Khasi intellectuals live, mixing with various outsiders who are engaged in official work or in business. The British administration opened the way to missionary activities, especially that of the Welsh Calvinist Methodists who set up a mission in the Hills in 1841, almost at the same time as British political influence began to make itself felt in the Khasi Hills. Along with the political penetration from Cherrapunjee (1833) to Shillong, missionaries established many institutions, including churches, schools and hospitals, etc. Christian education, bringing with it the promise of clerical positions, attracted young Khasi a great deal; and the majority of the upland Khasi have been converted to Christianity. They have become the modern intellectuals of their people. 178 648 797 [871] [743]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

621 [Jatinga]

[175] This village was founded in 1905 by Khasi immigrants from the Jaintia Hills. At the entrance of the village, a bust of the founder, Lakhanbang Suchiang, stands facing towards the east; it was erected on the occasion of the celebration of their Golden jubilee, in November 1955. Houses are scattered along the ridge of the moutain to the east and to the west; in the centre is the church. All the inhabitants are Christians. Before the Partition this was one of the most modern and prosperous villages in Assam.

Jatinga provides a very interesting instance of the Khasi 'colonial' village. It is surrounded by villages of the Kuki, of the Zemi-Naga, and of the Cacharee, who constitute the main population of the North Cachar Hills, and who are tribes entirely different from the Khasi, in economy, social organization, language and culture. Therefore, Jatinga is like an island of Khasi community. I took this village as one of my fields, because I was particularly interested to discover how far the Khasi matrilineal organization is kept up in a community thus situated, surrounded by patrilineal tribes, and considerably modernized by Christianization and economic prosperity; and I was also interested in the process of formation of a new village, in comparison with Rinsibara and Joshipara in the Garo Hills.

Formation of the Present Population of Jatinga.

The first immigrants to Jatinga.

The main population of Jatinga, including the founder, originated in Bataw village in the Jaintia Hills, twelve miles away from Jaintiapur, the capital of the then Jaintia Rajas. This village is situated on the border of the Jaintia Hills and the East Bengal plain, the location being very similar to that of Shella, as are their culture and economy. In the later part of the nineteenth century, some members of Bataw village moved to Borkhala, ten miles from Silchar, one of the biggest villages of the then Cacharee king.

These immigrants who came to Borkhala stayed there about fifteen years before they came to Jatinga. Kloribon, the first daughter of the founder's sister was born there. In November 1905, some Christian Khasi left Borkhala for Jatinga, acting on information gathered from a Welsh Mission at Haflong, that the land of present Jatinga was fertile and fit for their cultivation. They were the first immigrants to Jatinga. The Government record names the following three persons as the first immigrants to Jatinga: Suchiang Lakhanbang, Tariang, and Suchen Munik. In fact, according to the data which I collected at Jatinga, Suchiang Lakhanbang was accompanied by the following persons (the names in brackets indicate the clans):

his wife, Misibon (Phanwar),[1]
his brother, Pryntah, and Pryntah's wife, Sintu (Rupsi),
his sister, Laptho, and Laptho's husband, Munik (Suchen) with their daughter, Kloribon, and Munik's younger brother, Sain.
his friend, Tariang.

Soon after their settlement, Sain, the brother of Munik, brought his wife Tahin (Suiam) from Jaintia. Misibon brought her younger sister, Diasibon. Tariang who came with Lakhanbang afterwards called his wife, Palong. But having spent some time there, they left eventually for another place, so that

1. Misibon was a native of the Cherrapunjee area of the Khasi Hills (not of Jaintia like the others). She was a school teacher at Cherrapunjee, and later became a teacher at a school near Jaintiapur, where she married Lakhanbang.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR? Khasi AR?

there are none of their descendants in Jatinga. Summing up, the first party who settled at Jatinga was composed of people of the following five clans:

1. Suchiang — Lakhanbong, his sister, Lapthe, and her daughter, Khwiben, his brother, Pryntah.
2. Suchen — Munik and his younger brother, Sain.
3. Phanwar — Misibon and her younger sister, Diasibon.
4. Rupsi — Sintu, the wife of Pryntah.
5. Suiam — Tahin, the wife of Sain.

Among them, Suchen had no female member. Phanwar had no successor: Misibon had no issue and Diasibon did not marry. Therefore, Suchiang, Rupsi and Suiam are the oldest clans in present Jatinga. Suchiang and Rupsi especially are the dominant and richest groups among the present population.

This was the time when the railway from Gauhati to Silchar was being constructed. Some Khasi labourers were working at Haflong on the construction of the railway. After the foundation of Jatinga, these Khasi workers established marriage relations with the Khasi of Jatinga, and finally, upon completion of the railway, many of them became the inhabitants of Jatinga. The present members of the Dome and Siangshai clans are the descendants of these people, and they form a considerable number of the present inhabitants of Jatinga. Besides them, there were a few other Khasi at Haflong who were engaged in trading business. In the course of time, they also had marital relations with Jatinga people and came to Jatinga.

After five years had elapsed they found that in spite of their hard work the land was not favourable to them. Many of them left Jatinga. This was the hardest period of Jatinga history.

The second migration (1919-1923).

The railway which once had been blocked was reopened in 1919. The people who had left Jatinga came back to settle there. This time the circumstances seemed to them quite favourable. The pan trees which they had planted earlier were growing and they could gather considerable produce. The village grew bigger around 1920 as a result of new immigrants from Jaintia, most of them were people from Bataw, the village of the founder. In this period, many immigrants came from Jaintia not only to Jatinga but also to Sylhet, Borkhola and other places outside the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. It seems that by this time the over-populated Jaintia realized that these areas were favourable for their new home. However, the successive waves of Jaintia immigrants to Jatinga ceased by 1925, its population having reached saturation point.

Orange production brought economic prosperity to the people of Jatinga. Wealthy villagers employed temporary labourers from the Jaintia Hills every year. Some of these labourers came with their families and others came individually. During their stay at Jatinga, some of them married and settled there. Hence, there are also descendants of such labourers among the present inhabitants of Jatinga.

Some Aspects of Descent Groups.

Throughout the history of Jatinga, immigrations have always been undertaken by a family (elementary family, siblings) or by an individual, but never by a group of clan members. Therefore, the present population is grouped in small descent groups according to each migration. Though some of them happened to have the same clan name, their history of migration and their

1903-28, 2. Barth 1982.] Demography. According to the 1881 census of India, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District contained 221,902 Khasis and 97,332 Syntengs, Pnars, and Jaintias (India [Republic] 1960-57). These figures, together with those for Khasis enumerated in Cachar (4,000), Mikir and North Cachar Hills (407), Lakhimpur (287), Sibsagar (279), and Darrang (211) districts, and those for Syntengs enumerated in Mikir and North Cachar District (804), yield a total of 325,224 Khasis. History and cultural relations. Khasis believe that they had supernatural origin in Khasi Hills (see Gait 1926: 280 for historical evidence, and Bafy 1920: 5-9 for myth, but see also Costa 1906, 1908; Gordon 1907: 10-11, and Chatterji 1951: 12). Khasi tradition also states that in early times they moved gradually from east to west, from Jaintia toward Khasi Hills, in the practice of peripatetic agriculture (Gutpheh 1947: 97-98). The salient fact of known Khasi history, which begins generally in the mid-sixteenth century A.D. when there already existed the present-day 25 native Khasi chiefdoms, is the distinctive line of development followed by the separate kingdom of Jaintia. To the north, Jaintia was successively tributary, in part or in whole, to the Kachari kingdom (ca. 1220 A.D.), the Koch kingdom (strongest ca. 1500 A.D.), and the Ahom kingdom (strongest ca. 1700 A.D.) (Shakespear 1914: Map 1). To the south, about 1500 A.D., Jaintia extended its rule over a tract of Sylhet, which was populated by Hindus and Muslims, and saw its kings fall thereafter under Brahmanic influence. In the early 1800s, Jaintia became involved in the fratricidal strife then prevalent in the ruling family of Manipur. In 1830, after the Jaintia king ignored British warnings not to seize British subjects for human sacrifice, Jaintia was punished by the British annexation of the Jaintia parganas in Sylhet. The Jaintia king then voluntarily turned over to the British the hills area of his domain, so that the whole of Jaintia became part of British India and, in 1860, came to be taxed as such, although the Jaintias were otherwise allowed to maintain their traditional system of village government. • By contrast, the remaining Khasi states had few formal external relations until British times. Khasis resided and traded in both the Brahmaputra and Sylhet valleys, but were basically turned toward the three core hills, where warfare between villages and between the states was apparently common. Khasis came into indirect relation with the British in 1765, when Sylhet and its markets became part of British India. In the 1770s, cropped-up Khasi raids into Sylhet caused the British to throw up a deterring line of forts along the foothills. Later, it became necessary to place an embargo on Khasi products in the Sylhet markets. In 1827, the British penetrated into western Khasi Hills by negotiating with the Khasi chief of Nongkhlaw State to build a road through his territory, linking the recently annexed Brahmaputra valley with Calcutta. For three decades

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thereafter, the British negotiated treaties with all the Khasi states, the last treaty being signed in 1862. It was contracted that the chiefs would be subject to the authority of a resident political agent, whose duties would involve maintaining law and order, judging cases of heinous crimes, approving the popular selection of any new chief, and exercising control over certain categories of natural resources. Khasis were guaranteed noninterference in their customary way of life, and they were not then, nor are they now, taxed. Most Khasis, as opposed to Jaintias, were never an integral part of British India, but they did undergo social change as a result of British presence. To summarize Mills (n.d.): (1) The British introduced the potato, which the Khasis rapidly took up as a cash crop for marketing as far as Calcutta. The intensive specialization exhausted the soil and made for ever-poorer crops. (2) Christian missionaries made large numbers of converts, and there arose the difficult question of whether a Christian should inherit property that traditionally was earmarked for her performance of non-Christian religious rituals. (3) About 1864 the British transferred their headquarters from Cherrapunji to Shillong. When they made Shillong the capital of the entire state of Assam, non-Khasis flocked to it, land values soared, and the concept of private property became increasingly important. Khasis began to marry with members of other ethnic groups, which introduced confusion into traditional social patterns. These problems were exacerbated during World War II, when Shillong and its environs enjoyed enormous economic prosperity. One notable aftermath of this affluence has been the accelerated enrollments in schools and colleges. Hundreds of Khasis now have the B.A., M.A., and even the Ph.D. degree. • With the Independence of India in 1947, and under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (which was drafted by a Khasi), the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District became a Part B, or Autonomous, Tribal Area, to be governed by a District Council composed largely of Khasis and Jaintias, and responsible not to the Legislature of Assam, but to the Governor of Assam as agent of the President of India. The native-state system and the chiefs still exist, and the District Council finds it difficult to effect legislation which is neither offensive to regional custom nor a simple blueprint of ill-fitting all-India legislation. The major political schism at this time is between Jaintias, who are accustomed to centralized authority and taxation, and Khasis, who resist the notion of taxation to support the work of a central District Council. [Cf. Gait 1926; Aitchison 1931; Bhuyan 1949; Morris 1910.]

SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSING. Settlement pattern. Khasis live sedentarily in named, nucleated, and unplanned villages which are situated just below hill summits to avoid strong winds but still be defensible, and which usually include a de-

16: McCormack E-4,5 (1956-1958) 1964
[P. 110B] AR7 Khasi AR7

another. In other words, a state is not a fixed territorial entity. In the early twentieth century, the most populous of the 25 chiefdoms, Khyrim, contained 36,833 persons occupying 7,859 houses in 372 villages, and the least populous, Nonglwai, contained 246 persons occupying 53 houses in 3 villages. Fifteen of the chiefdoms were headed by a *syiem* (chief), three by a *lyngdoh* (priest), six by a sirdar, and one by a *wahadadar*. These leaders all had executive and judicial functions, but a chief's authority was limited in that he had to obtain the approval of his executive council before acting. The other leaders were subject to a similar limitation. A chief maintained a small police force. His major sources of revenue were market tolls, fines, and, more recently, income from licenses to distill rice whisky. Succession to a ruling role in the larger states traditionally involved election by members of a lineage that had a hereditary right to elect, from among members of a lineage that had the hereditary right to rule. In British times, the elective basis was broadened, differentially in the various states, even to the point of popular elections. [Cf. Aitchison 1931; Lyngdoh 1952.] **Social stratification.** The three classes of lineage are the nobles, the commoners, and the slaves or servants. This stratification applies only to the recruitment to office in the native-state system, for there is no hypergamy, and in a village assembly everyone has equal voice. The noble lineages have the hereditary right to fill from among their male members roles such as village or state priest, councilor to a chief, or elector of a chief. The few lineages which today are remembered as slave or servant lineages had the inherited obligation to render special services to a chief's household. There is no Khasi term for "commoner." Every lineage other than a noble or a slave lineage is a commoner lineage, and the commoner lineages are in the majority. **Warfare.** Warfare was suppressed by the British, and little is known for certain about its traditional forms. The tactics which confronted the British were the ambush and the guerrilla raid. Traditional goals included taking heads from other Khasis and capturing women from the valleys.

RELIGION. **Major and indigenous religions.** A Welsh Calvinistic Methodist missionary penetrated into Cherrapunji in 1832, and the work that he began continues to this day. His society, which has since become the Welsh Presbyterian Foreign Mission, introduced writing, village primary schools, a high school, a theological seminary, and a hospital. Competing missionaries followed, and by 1914 some Shillong Khasis were puzzling over the tenets not only of traditional Hinduism and Islam but also of the Buddhists, Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Unitarians (Roy 1914). By the 1920s, missionaries of the Church of God and the Seventh Day Adventists were

17: Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1962 AR7 Khasi AR7
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THE KHASI FESTIVAL OF 'POMBLANG'

S. BANERJEE

INTRODUCTION

The Khasi inhabit the upland of the central part of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They reckon descent through mother and the youngest daughter (Ka khadduh) of the house is the custodian of the ancestral property. Belief in the existence of spirits is strong among them and the causes of diseases are ascertained by taking recourse to the process of divination. They are ruled by different categories of Chief. The *Siem* is the highest official responsible for the administration of the state but a few small states are also governed by *Sirdars* with same powers as vested in the former although does not possess the same status. It is interesting to note that their priest whose rank is next to *Siem*, have also been allotted to perform this secular duties in some of the regions of the Khasi country. The Chief function through their respective council comprising elected members from different administrative units. He is rather subservient to this body as he is liable to be censured or even dismissed, if his activities are not in conformity with the Khasi traditional usage. Most of his directives are implemented through the assistance of his subordinates who are in-charge of various sections of the State. The Khasi place his grievance first to these junior officers for redress and justice, after which an appeal can be preferred to the *Siem* or any other higher officer as the case may be. One of the eminent States of the Khasi people known as Khyriem, where this festival is celebrated, consists of eight units for administrative convenience under the supervision of different grades of officials who participated in this celebration along with the *Siem* as representatives of the people.

The Khasi festival of *Pomblang* (Goat killing) described below used to be celebrated at one time in Shillong when the Khasi states of Khyriem and Mylliem were not separated. The first chief of the Khyriem state U Singh Manik shifted his headquarters to Nongkrem village after partition of the kingdom, which occured before the arrival of the British. He again moved to Lanekerdem after a brief stay at the village of Lyneshing. He performed this festival as long as he was there, transferring it again to Nongkrem where he re-settled again. It was celebrated here for a long time and consequently it was named after this village. Although the ruling family had later on shifted its residence about sixty years ago to the present village Smit, during the time of U Klur Singh, Siem, it is performed regularly as *Nongkrem dance* which was observed by the author from 21st June to 25th June, 1955.

OBJECT OF THE FESTIVAL

It is being held every year since the days of U Shillong who was supposed to be the founder of original Khyriem State. They celebrate it to perpetuate his memory and pay homage with a view to ensure rain, good harvest, eliminating diseases and famine. He was worshipped along with other ancestors with view to guide the present Chief in his discharge of his duties and for the welfare of the people.

The house of Siem (iing-sad) where the rites are observed, is considered sacred. It consists of a big-hall (shlur) in the centre, surrounded by rooms. One of these on the north is used as a kitchen room (iing-chetja) where ritual

18: Godwin-Austen G-3 (ca. 1872) 1875 AR7
Khasi AR7

rude stone monuments. At the village of Nougshai, near Shillong, are to be seen some very striking monoliths; and although they do not come up quite to the length of those at Nurtiang (noticed by Dr. Hooker in his "Himalayan Journals"), yet they are very worthy of being mentioned. They stand on the open spur just above the village, and have been worked out of the beds of the Shillong sandstone series, and some of the smaller blocks have been taken from the conglomerate beds, the lowest in the series, and which come in, in the bed of the ravine, to the north of the spur. There are a number of monuments on this site, large and small, arranged both in line and on two sides of a square; the two largest have their central monoliths—height, 24 ft. 3 in.; width, 5 ft. 6 in.; thickness, 8 in.; and height, 23 ft. 2 in.; width, 2 ft. 9 in.; thickness, 1 ft., respectively.

Plate ii., which is taken from a photograph by Mr. William Robert, Assistant Surveyor in the Khasi Hills survey party, gives an excellent idea of the second largest structure, showing the very massive flat-stone, the "Mao Kynthai," in front. This structure consisted of thirteen upright stones, which could not all be brought into the field of the camera; but the six outside stones on the right are shown. Many of the slabs in the adjacent monuments have been overthrown and broken quite recently, perhaps by Sepoys and camp followers from the military station close by. At one time a mountain battery of Eurasian Artillery was quartered there, and I attribute the overthrow of so many of the stones in the neighbourhood to their handiwork, who would look on such amusement as a "great lark." The Sepoy (native of India) is not of a mischievous disposition; the European and half-European (uneducated) is markedly so. Thus the monument with the highest stone is imperfect, and it must, when perfect, have been a very handsome one. This is a sad pity, after the time and labour that must have been expended in its erection.

I did not observe any new slabs anywhere in the immediate neighbourhood. Nougshai must formerly have been a large and powerful village; it stands on a naturally very strong position, and old lines of fortification are to be traced on many sides, especially on the approach from the direction of the Falls of the Umiam. These old lines of defence are on a curious system: a ditch and bank have been carried forward from the main defences from 200 to 300 yards down the ridge of the spurs, thus effectually preventing an enemy working round the hill sides below the villages.

This fortified site points to a state of things in these hills when the relations between the large village communities or

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

homicide), in which their own subjects are concerned. All cases of homicide, or matters involving disputes between people belonging to different States, are adjudicated upon by the British officers of the District. 648 692

In the British possessions, the principal sources of revenue are rents and royalties derived from mineral workings, such as lime and coal; rents of fisheries; and a house tax, which varies, according to situation and productiveness of the soil, from R. 1 to Rs. 2 or from 2s. to 4s. per house. A land tax is only levied in tracts where the Government possesses the actual proprietary right in the soil. Again, in the Khásí States, the British Government, which undertakes the management of the natural products of the country, such as waste lands, coal, lime, etc., receives a half-share of the rents realized from these sources, the other half belonging to the native Chiefs. The other sources of revenue of the Chiefs are market dues, cesses levied occasionally for State purposes, and fines realized in the administration of justice. 648 651 [135]

HISTORY.—Our first knowledge of the Khásí Hills dates from the time when the East India Company acquired the *diwání* of Bengal in 1765. The adjoining District of Sylhet was included in that grant; but as the hillmen had never acknowledged any subjection to the Muhammadans, so they still remained absolutely independent of the British power. However, the necessities of commerce, arising from their monopoly of the lime quarries, from which Bengal has drawn its supply from time immemorial, soon attracted European enterprise to the country. As stated in the Appendix to the Statistical Account of Sylhet, the control of the profits of the lime trade formed in early times one of the most valuable advantages attaching to the position of the official in charge of that District. It does not appear that any European had been attracted to reside in the Hills before 1826. In that year the Rájá of Nongklao entered into an agreement with certain European British subjects to allow a road to be made across the Hills, to connect the Surmá valley with Assam Proper. These Europeans took up their residence at Nongklao. Misunderstandings unfortunately arose, and, partly by the misconduct of some of their Bengálí followers, the growing discontent and apprehension were fanned into a flame. On 4th April 1829 the Khásiás rose in arms and massacred Lieutenants Bedingfield and Burlton, together with some sepoys. This led to military operations on the part of the British Government, which 175 648 [135] [487]

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

175 continued through several cold seasons. The last of the Khásí chiefs
648 did not tender his submission until 1833. In February 1835 Colonel Lister was appointed Political Agent in the Khásí Hills, with his headquarters at Nongklao; and the command of the Sylhet Light Infantry battalion was also placed in his hands. The civil and military functions remained conjoined until 1854, when Mr. Hudson was deputed to Cherrá Púnjí, which had then become the administrative headquarters, with the title of Junior Assistant-Commissioner, shortly afterwards changed to the present one of Deputy-Commissioner.

The Jáintiá Hills came into British possession in 1835. In that year, as related in the Statistical Account of Sylhet District, the last Rájá of Jáintiá, Indra Singh, was deposed on the charge of complicity with certain of his tribesmen who had carried off three British subjects and barbarously immolated them at the shrine of Káli. The portion of his territory that lay in the plains was forthwith annexed to the District of Sylhet; and the Rájá voluntarily resigned the hill portion, of which we also took possession. A pension of Rs. 500 a month, or £600 a year, was granted to the deposed Rájá for life, and he resided peaceably in Sylhet until
175 his death in 1861. When we first assumed the administration of
648 the Hills, no change was made in the indigenous revenue system,
651 which consisted simply of the payment of a he-goat once a year from each village. The Rájá had derived the greater portion of his income from his possessions in the plains. In 1860, however, a house tax was imposed, the highest limit of which was one rupee (2s.) per house. This measure of direct taxation was very obnoxious to the Syntengs. They formed irregular gatherings, at which they resolved to resist payment, or at least to refuse to pay except through their own hereditary Rájá, who was then alive. An outbreak took place in the early part of the year, but it was promptly suppressed; the people were disarmed, and matters went on much as usual. But the disarmament was imperfect, and it soon became evident that the Syntengs were profoundly disaffected to our rule. Towards the close of 1860 new taxation was introduced, in the form of judicial stamps; and the elaborate schedules of the new income tax were thrust into the hands of persons, few of whom could read the language in which they were framed. Imposts also were
175 introduced upon fisheries and the right to cut timber. Con-
764 siderable feeling had been excited by a sanitary prohibition against
648

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

burning the dead in the immediate neighbourhood of the village of Jowái. Suspicions of insurrection arose during the months of October and November 1861. In the beginning of January 1862 alarming reports were received from various quarters, and the first serious outbreak occurred on the 17th of that month. This was occasioned by the interference of a *dárogá*, or native police official, with a religious ceremony that took place at the village of Jalong. In such ceremonies dancing with arms is held essential; and the *dárogá* took upon himself to disarm the dancers. This was the signal for a general rising. The *thánd* or police station at Jowái was burned to the ground; the garrison of sepoys was besieged, and all show of British authority was swept away throughout the Hills. The Syntengs fought bravely for their independence, and at first were successful in cutting off several small detachments of police and sepoys. Their weapons were bows and arrows. In common with the other hill tribes of the North-East Frontier, their chief defence consisted in a series of strong stockades, one behind another; and the paths leading to their villages were thickly planted with *pánjis*, or little bamboo spikes, stuck in the ground like caltrops. The battalion of sepoys stationed in the Hills was rendered inefficient by sickness. At last it was found necessary to move a regular army, including an elephant battery and two regiments of Sikhs, into the country in order to quell the revolt. Colonel Dunsford was in chief command. He was accompanied by Major Haughton, the Governor-General's Agent on the North-East Frontier, and Captain Morton, the Deputy-Commissioner of the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills, who acted in a political capacity. The operations were tedious and harassing. The rebel chiefs were captured one by one, and the District was declared to be finally pacified in March 1863, after the rebellion had lasted for fifteen months. The special Commission appointed under Act xi. of 1857, for the trial of offenders in the Jáintiá Hills, was dissolved in December 1863. The causes of the rebellion were thus summed up by Major Haughton in an official despatch to the Government of Bengal:—

'Taxation was introduced without the supervision with which such a measure should have been accompanied. It was followed up by fresh taxation and rumours of other taxes, also by fiscal and other innovations, which tended to disturb the minds of the people, without any counterpoise such as might have resulted from the continued presence of a European officer.' The Syntengs, like the

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

175 Khásiás, have, ever since the measures of improvement which
648 followed, remained peaceable and contented.

General Aspect of the District.—The District consists
133 almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is steep, until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4000 feet. Higher up there is another plateau at Máo-flang, ten miles to the eastward of which, and in the same mountain range, the Civil Station of Shillong is situated at an elevation of 4900 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1000 and 2000 feet below the level of Shillong, and the second lower down, about 3000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken
137 here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and
[778] more rank in the lower elevations. A remarkable feature in the aspect of the country throughout the hills is the numerous sacred groves which superstition has preserved from time immemorial from the destructive hand of the woodcutter. These sacred groves contain beautiful timber-trees of various kinds, rare orchids, rhododendrons, and wild cinnamon. On the more elevated table-lands, pine trees and stunted oak are met with; and in the lower hills, in every direction, are dense forests of the usual Indian trees, containing valuable timber.

134 The geological formation is mainly granitic, with stratified rocks
135 of sandstone, limestone, and shale. The coal-beds rest on trap and metamorphic rocks. The prevailing surface soil is a red ferruginous loam.

133 Mountains.—The principal mountain ranges and highest peaks in the Khási and Jáintiá Hills are as follow:—(1) The Shillong range—height of principal peak, 6449 feet above sea level. (2) Dingiei range—principal peak, 6400 feet. (3) Máo-thad-rái-shán range—highest peak, 6297 feet. (4) Láo-syn-niá range—highest peak, 5775 feet. (5) Láit-máo-doh range—highest peak, 5377 feet. (6) Láo-ber-sát—highest peak, 5400 feet. (7) Láo-bah range—highest peak, 4464 feet. (8) Lyng-ker-dem range—highest peak, 5000 feet. (9) Lúm-baiong range—highest peak, 4646 feet. (10) Máo-syn-rám range—highest peak, 5810 feet.

The principal mountains are:—(1) Rap-leng—height, 5671 feet.

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

105 [175] [197] It will here be recalled that the Khasi are a matrilineal agricultural people, pre-litterate until the advent of the British in the sixth decade of the 19th century, organized under democratically ruling *siem*, or Khasi princes and chieftains and speaking an Austro-Asiatic language [14]. Their 144 physical affinities are unmistakably mongoloid and quite distinct from the Assamese speaking plains-Indians, — but not from the other mountaineers of Assam, Nepal and even Burmah or China, with whom they feel to be more closely related, as with the Indian plainspeople, as some of the tribal designations in the following lists of terms for Non-Khasi testifies (comp. No. 41 as against No. 42, 43 and 43/*a-e*).

114 122 In the collection of the material, I was hampered by my inability to pick up the Khasi language sufficiently quickly, for conversation without the help of an interpreter, but on the other hand greatly eased by generous and voluntary assistance on the part of several Khasi friends, especially U Ekiman Singh, the President, Unitarian Union, Khasi- and Jaintai Hills and his (Khasi) wife, Ka Austria [15], who offered me hospitality in their house at Maw Syn Jri, during my stay there. Dr. H. LYNGDOH, Shillong, the author of detailed accounts on Khasi religious ceremonial and institutions [16], U Jeeban Roy, a leading Pnár gentleman of Jowei in the Jaintia Hills, Ka Ellen Giri, Principal, Govt. Basic Education Training Centre, Malki, Shillong, Ka Kongmen, Shillong, and U David Roy, Prime Minister (retd.), and a number of hospitable Wár Khasi and Wár-Jaintia pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hills, especially from the villages Mawlat and Padu, also helped me greatly in my task. My thanks are due to all of them.

101 114 The data, submitted and briefly described in this paper were thus collected in four different areas.

1. The South-eastern corner of the Khasi-Hills (plateau-area),
2. the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills, the "Wár-Khasi country" between the Khasi plateau proper and the northern boundary of East Pakistan,
3. the central plateau of the Jaintia Hills, round its capital market Jowei, and
4. the southern slopes of the Jaintia Hills, the "Wár-Jaintia country" between these and a section of the northern boundary of East Pakistan, further to the East than area 2.

197 Slightly different Khasi dialects are spoken in these four regions, Jaintia (Pnár or "Synteng") and Wár-Jaintia being more akin to each other, similarly as Plateau-Khasi and Wár-Khasi are.

101 175 The Pnár or Jaintias ("Synteng" is a slightly opprobious designation, used by the Plateau-Khasi for these, their eastern neighbours) look back

[14] SCHMIDT (1906).

[553] [15] So named, because Austria was much in the news at the time of her birth, during the first world war: — a fact which illustrates the Khasi peculiarity to use either ad hoc inventions as names for children, or to adopt such, from the Khasi point of view, outlandish words like: "Ka Austria" or "Ka Mediterranean Sea" as names for their children.

[16] LYNGDOH (1937).

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

on a historical past, different from that of the Khasi proper, the former having been ruled by the powerful, but somewhat Hinduised dynasty of the Jaintia Rajas until the Jaintia Wars of the British; the latter by small independent chiefs. Yet Jaintia social organization appears on the whole to preserve the matrilineal social structure clearer and to be less influenced by plains-acculturation, than that of the Khasi, though a few features of Brahmanical religious observances and also some traces of racial admixture are found in the immediate vicinity of Jowei, the former summer residence of the Jaintia Rajas. Stronger no doubt, than this influence, was that exercised by the British and non-Assamese Indians in the provincial capital Shillong since 1866. Methods of agriculture and other aspects of material civilization differ but little in the Jaintia- and Khasi plateau-areas.

The same cannot be said of both: the Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintias. Linguistically their affiliations are with the Khasi or Jaintias respectively, in the plateau-areas. Economically, however, both Wár-groups form a separate pan-leaf cultivating unit in the little accessible steep southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hill massif. Both Wár-groups live in the environment of luscious tropical flora and fauna, sharply differentiated from the cool, barren plateau with its perennial winds and the heroic, if solitary beauty of its highland heaths, which forms the background of both the Khasi- and Jaintia plateau-groups.

The age of the Wár-Khasi and -Jaintias, as one independent economic, — and two half-independent dialectical linguistic entities, is an intricate problem. The two Wár-groups subsist on pan-leaf cultivation as a money crop, grown in the thick tree-gardens as creepers; not on food-cultivation, as do the plateau-groups, because there is insufficient space on the steep slopes, for vegetable gardens or -fields. The pan-leaf cultivators therefore depend on food, purchased from outside. The slopes seem to have been uninhabited until not long ago. Yet pan-leaf chewing is such an integral part of Khasi life, that until quite recently, and occasionally even now, a distance between two places is not measured by the number of hours used for walking, but by the number of betelnut- and pan-leaf packages, consumed on the way. Also the common benediction among Khasi expresses the wish that so and so may eat pan in the Garden of God. Yet pan-cultivation and the settlements of the Wár-people as pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes seem comparatively young. Pan-cultivation on the plateau is impracticable. It is therefore possible that pan was for a long time only a much valued import article from the plains, bartered against Khasi ore and iron tools, though it is now an export article from the Wár-country, brought to the markets of the plains, by both Wár-Khasi and Wár-Jaintia women and men.

According to a tradition, across which I came among the Nonglamin clan of the Nongmuker village, the ancestors of the present Wár people were on the plateau at a time when no pan-cultivation was going on in the slopes and none of the present big estates of pan-tree gardens was yet held by their present (Wár-) owners. A not distant ancestor of a Nonglamin clan-member who about two or three generations ago told the story to U Siang (one of